

State Theater
238-244 Liberty Street
Schenectady
Schenectady County
New York

HABS No. NY-6264

HABS
NY

47 - SCHAE,

33 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HABS No. NY-6264

Significance: The State Theater opened on December 10, 1922 showing Harold Lloyds first five reel silent film comedy "Grandma's Boy". The opening was celebrated by Schenectady Socialist Mayor George Lunn and New York City Soprano Eldora Stanford. The interior architectural design is a fine display of rich ornamentation, and excellent plaster craftsmanship characteristic of early 20th century movie theater design.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of Erection - Circa June 1920 to December 1922. Source: Title Search indicates a land lease was signed with Max Spiegel the theater owner in June of 1920 and the Gazette Newspaper account states the theater opened on December 10, 1922.
2. Architect: Reilly and Hall, 405 Lexington Avenue, New York City. Source: Copy of original theater drawings.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners:
 - 1905 Deed April 15, 1905, recorded in Book 158, page 106. Margaret C. McClellan to A. Vedder Magee.
 - 1910 Deed September 10, 1910, recorded in Book 200, page 122. Margaret C. McClellan to A. Vedder Magee.
 - 1917 Deed September 4, 1917, recorded in Book 261 page 57. James A. Luckhurst to A. Vedder Magee.
 - 1920 Deed June 15, 1920, recorded in Book 285, page 14. Helena M. Shaw to A. Vedder Magee.
 - 1920 Lease June 15, 1920, recorded in Book 294, page 110. A. Vedder Magee to Max Spiegel.
 - 1928 Deed September 20, 1928, recorded in Book 361, page 356. The City of Schenectady to A. Vedder Magee.
 - 1952 Release February 21, 1952, recorded in Book 662, page 176. Treasury Dept. IRS to Estate of A. Vedder Magee. Date of death, February 7, 1949.

- 1959 Deed October 8, 1959, recorded in Book 790, page 21.
Richie C. Magee as Administratrix of the goods, chattels,
and credits of A. vedder Magee deceased to S.H. Fabian and
Samuel Rosen.
- 1959 Deed November 10, 1959, recorded in Book 797, page 45,
S.H. Fabian and Samuel Rosen to State Wedgeway Corporation.
- 1960 Deed June 22, 1960, recorded in Book 798, page 519.
State Wedgeway Corporation to Albert S. Mattarazzo and
Muriel Mattarazzo his wife.
- 1962 Deed March 30, 1962, recorded in Book 822, page 465.
State Wedgeway Corporation to the Brookly Fox Corporation.
- 1964 Deed November 10, 1962, recorded in Book 855, page 212.
The Brookly Fox Corporation to Albert S. Matarazzo and
Muriel Matarazzo his wife.
- 1966 Mortgage, April 1, 1966, recorded Book 812, page 467.
The Brookly Fox Corporation to Fabian Enterprises Inc.
- 1968 Deed January 31, 1968, recorded Book 899, page 202.
Fabian Enterprises to Simon H. Fabian, trustee under
Indenture of Trust dated November 29, 1929.
- 1971 Deed February 26, 1971, recorded in Book 943, page 448.
E. David Rosen Successor Trustee under Indenture of Trust,
established by Jacob Fabian to First Hudson Properties
Corporation.
- 1972 Referee's Deed, October 31, 1922, recorded in Book 962,
page 305.
Thomas M. Whalen III, Referee to Amaj. Ltd.
- 1975 Lis Pendens November 19, 1975, recorded in Book 15 of Lis
Pendens, page 1082.
Foreclosure of Tax Liens pursuant to Article Eleven, Title
Three of the Real Property Tax Law by City of Schenectady.
- 1977 Tax Deed August 12, 1977, recorded in Book 1009, page 864.
Bruno L. Pezzano as Director of Finance, City of Schenectady
To City of Schenectady
4. Original plans and construction: See 4x5 negatives of Reilly
and Hall drawings of elevations, foundations, longitudinal section,
attic and roof plans.
5. Alterations and additions: The original seats were removed
from the orchestra sections and replaced circa 1950.

B. Historical Context:

The State Theater was built 1920-22 at a time when Schenectady was
going through a great increase in population from 32,000 in 1900
to 89,000 in 1920 as G.E. and Alco, two major industries made major
expansions during the industrial revolution. The State Theater con-

struction was in response to the market for many movie houses during this golden age of silent film, and later sound films. The State Theater soon took a back seat to the larger and more versatile Proctors opened in 1926. The State Theater got more second run movies from then on. Fabian Theaters owned the State Theater from 1940's until 1971, at which time a theater company began booking X-rated movies which showed off and on during the next six years. The City took the theater over for back taxes on August 12, 1977.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

The State Theater Building was designed by the New York City Architectural firm of Reilly and Hall and constructed in the early 1920's. The motion picture industry was booming at this time and large multi-purpose theaters were being built everywhere to satisfy the demand. These theaters were designed as huge, ornate show pieces for silent films with orchestral accompaniments. They soon became vaudeville-motion picture-variety houses. With the advent of talking pictures they became straight movie houses. The State Theater Building is a large, highly decorative and well executed example of this era in theater construction.

The building consists of a brick shell with a steel and wood framed roof system. The exterior of the building, having no street frontage or entrance, is totally devoid of ornament or decoration. The interior, however, is a collection of gracious and highly decorated spaces culminating in the 1300 to 1400 seat auditorium with its elaborately detailed suspended plaster ceiling. This building, typical of theaters of its day, was a testament to the craftsmanship and artistry of its plasterers.

(1) Architectural Character:

This lobby is an elegant space with a series of functional and decorative columns and pilasters connected by arches which support a richly ornamented vaulted plaster ceiling. The columns and the sculptured ceiling architecturally define the entrances to the theater, stairways to the seating above, entrances to lounge/toilet rooms, and the public gathering spaces.

AUDITORIUM

Proceeding up the ramps from the lobby, one enters the Auditorium at the rear aisle of the main level. This level contains roughly two-thirds of the total theater seating on a sloping floor that descends six feet from the rear aisle to the orchestra pit. This level is roughly 100 feet square with a minimum clear span of 85 feet. The suspended vaulted ceiling springs from a lighting cove around the perimeter at 28 feet above the rear aisle floor level and rises to a maximum height of 50

feet at the apex of the central dome.

The upper level contains approximately one-third of the theater seating on a sloping floor constructed above the lobby and toilet rooms. The lower edge of this level is eight feet above the rear aisle of the main level and rises seven feet to its high edge at the south wall of the structure. This level is roughly 100 feet in width by 40 feet in depth, with a minimum clear span of 85 feet. Access to this seating area is provided via two open stairs from the rear aisle of the main level, and via the two enclosed stairways from the lobby at the southeast and southwest corners of the structure.

The auditorium is an enormous open space of grand proportions with elaborate and decorative plaster detailing applied to or suspended within the building structure. The predominant architectural element of this space is, of course, the plaster ceiling, the form of which, divides this huge space into two zones or areas. At the north end of the structure is the stage and orchestra pit area, defined by ten stylized corinthian columns palced in a semicircle of 40 foot radius. These columns rise from the stage level, 22 feet, to support a semicircular plaster lighting cove from which springs the ceiling, taking the form of a flattened hemispherical dome with a ventilation grille at its apex. South of this stage and orchestra pit area is the main seating area of the auditorium. This area, roughly 100 feet square with its centerpoint over the rear aisle of the main level, is defined with decorative walls on three sides and angled sections of wall facing towards the center at the four corners. Springing from the perimeter lighting cove at these four corners, are great sweeping arches rising across the vaulted ceiling, creating the form of a mock pendentive. These arches rise to a height of 40 feet above the rear aisle floor to a circular opening 55 feet in diameter, upon which rests a ribbed dome rising to a height of 50 feet above the floor, with a ventilation grille and central chandelier located at its apex.

(2) Condition of Fabric:

The current condition of the interior finishes of the State Theater Building are as follows:

1. The lobby space and its decorative plaster work and artificial marble are substantially intact, sound, and readily restorable to their original condition.
2. The auditorium space, with its decorative plaster walls and highly ornamented suspended plaster ceiling, although appearing substantially intact, have suffered significant damage due to roof leakage, saturation of plaster, freeze-thaw cycling severe corrosion of suspension components, and lack of adequate heat and ventilation within the

theater and attic spaces. In order to effect a thorough trustworthy restoration, the following would be required; removal of substantial portions of the ceiling, restoration of the suspension system - particularly the metal lath and its attachment to the carrier components, direct mechanical attachment of the heavy applied plaster ornamentation, replastering and recreation of ornament over significant areas of the ceiling and walls, and complete repainting duplicating the original colors. Anything less thorough than the above steps, such as a cosmetic replastering and replacement of missing ornamentation, would only be addressing the symptoms rather than the cause of the deterioration and would result in an unsound and unreliable repair as opposed to a restoration.

3. Some elements that are potential candidates for restoration and/or removal and reuse elsewhere are: the stage columns, theater seating, artificial marble wainscotting and loge boxes, and large areas of wood paneling used as wainscotting, low dividing walls and handrail walls.

4. The stage and backstage areas are devoid of finishes and deteriorated to the point where extensive reconstruction, particularly the wood stage structure, will be required to return them to some form of useability.

The interior finishes of the lobby are in the early stages of deterioration with localized areas of damage. The auditorium and stage, however, are in the advanced stages of deterioration with large areas requiring reconstruction and replacement to effect a total restoration. At present, this represents an extraordinarily comprehensive and costly restoration project. Further deterioration will only serve to aggravate the serious and dangerous conditions that already exist.

The current condition of the building structure of the State Theater Building is as follows:

1. Foundations and basement areas are sound and show no signs of significant cracking, settlement, or displacement.

2. Walls, pilasters, and parapets are sound, straight, and plumb and show no signs of significant cracking or displacement. The frost and moisture related deterioration present, while quite minor at this point, are indicative of conditions that, if not corrected, will ultimately result in the failure of the wall systems.

3. The concrete slabs-on-grade are basically sound with moderate cracking and minor heaving present. The elevated composite steel and concrete floors are sound and show few signs of deterioration. The wood floor systems are in a state of rotting and not sound. The wood floor backstage is rotted through and is unsafe. In the case of the floor

systems, continued uncontrolled entrance of water will destroy what is weak and accelerate deterioration of elements that are currently sound.

4. The steel roof framing system and supporting structure is relatively undamaged and sound. There is light to moderate surface rusting present throughout, but no evidence of serious deterioration due to corrosion. If, however, the severe leaking of the roof and lack of ventilation in the attic space is permitted to continue, corrosion of the steel framing will eventually pose a serious threat to the stability of the entire structure.

5. The wood roof structure, wood sheathing, roof covering systems, and roof drainage systems are in very poor condition and presently large quantities of water enter the structure, resulting in serious damage to the interior finishes and gradual deterioration of the structure itself. Under normal winter loading conditions, these roof elements are subject to imminent localized failure, resulting in rapidly accelerated deterioration.

B. Description of Exterior:

(1) Overall Dimensions:

The building is basically a parallelogram with overall dimensions of 100' x 200'.

(2) Foundations:

The foundation system for the State Theater Building consists of mass concrete spread footings and cast-in-place foundation walls on the north, west and south sides. The east side, which was constructed to share the west wall of the already existing Arcade, consists of concrete footings and piers cut into the older Arcade wall. The four columns that support the main roof framing bear upon steel grillages that rest upon massive reinforced concrete spread footings. These are interior columns and independent of the perimeter bearing walls. The foundation system, where it is exposed to view either on the interior or exterior above grade, appears to be in very sound condition with no evidence of significant cracking, settlement, displacement, or deterioration.

Basement or below grade construction is limited to the northeast corner of the building and consists of the old boiler room, pump room, and coal storage room. These rooms are of concrete construction for walls, floors, ceilings. These rooms are only accessible through the basement of the Arcade and were not examined. It can be reasonably assumed that these rooms are littered with debris and have been flooded from time to time due to uncontrolled roof drainage. Observing the spaces above these basement areas, however, indicates that the structure beneath is structurally intact and reasonably sound.

(3) Walls:

The walls of this structure are massive brick bearing walls with interior pilasters for stiffness on the north, west and south sides. The east wall, common with the Arcade, has exterior pilasters. The perimeter walls rise above the roof line as parapets and are capped in most cases with clay tile copings.

The walls on the north, west and south sides of the structure are in sound condition with no evidence of loose or falling brick or mortar. They appear straight, plumb, and true with a slight roll-in of the tall parapet on the north side. There is some evidence of efflorescence and slight frost damage to the parapets all around. At each roof drain location, steel overflow scuppers penetrate the parapet walls. The bottoms of these scuppers have rusted out over the years. Consequently, when roof drains freeze-up in the winter, water and ice run down the face of the wall at these locations and accelerate freeze-thaw deterioration.

Also, a crack in the parapet of the west wall has developed near the northwest corner, probably due to the expansive forces of freezing ponded roof water.

The east wall, adjacent to the Arcade, is reasonably sound above the Arcade roof and similar in condition to the other walls. The wall at roof level and below, however, has suffered frost damage and moderate deterioration of the outer wythe of the wall. The probable cause is snow and ice accumulation on the roof of the Arcade, with subsequent leakage into the Arcade, causing substantial interior damage. The chimney is in sound condition except for the last three feet which is cracked on the south side and has some loose brick.

(4) Structural System, Framing:

The framing system of this building consists of two main steel trusses running in an east-west direction, supported on four steel columns independent of the perimeter bearing walls. Three secondary steel trusses run in a north-south direction and frame into the main trusses. Five smaller steel trusses running in a north-south direction bear on pilasters at the north wall and frame into the northerly main truss (see Roof Framing Plan). Miscellaneous steel framing members connect this main framing network to the perimeter brick walls for bracing and stability. Steel purlins, spaced at ten to twelve feet on center are attached to this main framing network and support the wood rafters of the roof structure.

(5) Roof:

The roof structure consists of 2 x 6 wood rafters at 32 inch spacing bearing on the perimeter walls and steel purlins. The sheathing appears to be a 1 x 8 shiplapped pine board. The main portion of this roof rises steeply at approximately 16 on 12 from the east and west parapet walls to a height of 20 feet above the

gutter at the north wall to the line of the northerly main steel truss.

The condition of the steel roof framing system and its supporting structure appears to be sound. The columns are encased in clay tile construction and two of the four could be observed. The original bituminous coating appeared to be substantially intact with a modest amount of surface rust forming. Above the ceiling, the entire steel framing system could be observed, and exhibited an appearance of localized light to moderate rusting with substantial areas of the original bituminous coating still intact. Connections and bearing points appeared solid with only light corrosion present.

The wood roof structure, on the other hand, has deteriorated to the point of being totally unsafe and substantially beyond reclamation. Total failure of the roof covering and exceptionally high humidity in the unventilated attic space has permitted saturation of the framing members and roof sheathing. This has resulted in widespread rotting and fungus attack as shown by formation of large areas of white growth on the surface of wood components. Sections of the roof have actually fallen through and daylight is visible in hundreds of locations. Fragments of rotted wood from the sheathing above litter the backside of the suspended plaster ceiling. From the exterior one can observe the sagging or draping of the roof sheathing between the roof framing members.

ROOF COVERING, FLASHING, DRAINAGE, AND PARAPETS

The roof coverings of this structure consist of; asphalt shingles applied to the main central section of the roof, metal siding applied to the vertical surfaces of this central section, and built-up asphalt roofing in the roof areas of shallow slope and all around the perimeter at the parapet walls.

The vast majority of the roofing which consists of the asphalt shingles is totally worn out and deteriorated. The shingles are dried out and brittle and many have blown off entirely or are lying in the gutters. Soft spots and holes are visible in many locations. The metal siding material is covered with surface rust but is basically intact. The built-up asphalt roofing and built-up flashings are dried out, blistered, and in some locations, split.

C. Description of Interior:

(1) Floor Plans:

a. Lobby Area

The main entrance to the State Theater Building is located at the southeast corner of the structure accessible

through the existing Arcade. One enters the lobby on a platform at Arcade level, then steps down four risers to the main lobby level measuring roughly 90 feet in an east-west direction by 30 feet north-south direction with a ceiling height varying from nine to twelve feet. From this space two ramps, rising three feet, lead to the rear aisle of the main level of the auditorium. Near the ramps, steps descend three feet into men's and women's lounge/toilet rooms located at west and east sides, respectively, under the upper level of auditorium seating. Located at the southeast and southwest corners of the lobby space are stairs leading to the side aisles of the seating area above. (See Floor Plan).

b. Auditorium:

Proceeding up the ramps from the lobby, one enters the Auditorium at the rear aisle of the main level. This level contains roughly two-thirds of the total theater seating on a sloping floor that descends six feet from the rear aisle to the orchestra pit. This level is roughly 100 feet square with a minimum clear span of 85 feet. The suspended vaulted ceiling springs from a lighting cove around the perimeter at 28 feet above the rear aisle floor level and rises to a maximum height of 50 feet at the apex of the central dome.

The upper level contains approximately one-third of the theater seating on a sloping floor constructed above the lobby and toilet rooms. The lower edge of this level is eight feet above the rear aisle of the main level and rises seven feet to its high edge at the south wall of the structure. This level is roughly 100 feet in width by 40 feet in depth, with a minimum clear span of 85 feet. Access to this seating area is provided via two open stairs from the rear aisle of the main level, and via the two enclosed stairways from the lobby at the southeast and southwest corners of the structure.

The auditorium is an enormous open space of grand proportions with elaborate and decorative plaster detailing applied to or suspended within the building structure. The predominant architectural element of this space is, of course, the plaster ceiling, the form of which, divides this huge space into two zones or areas. At the north end of the structure is the stage and orchestra pit area, defined by ten stylized corinthian columns placed in semicircle of 40 foot radius. These columns rise from the stage level, 22 feet, to support a semicircular plaster lighting cove from which springs the ceiling, taking the form of a flattened hemispherical dome with a ventilation grille at its apex. South of this stage and orchestra pit area is the main seating area of the auditorium. This area, roughly 100 feet square with its centerpoint over the rear aisle of the main level, is defined with decorative walls on three sides and angled sections of wall facing towards the center at the

four corners. Springing from the perimeter lighting cove at these four corners, are great sweeping arches rising across the vaulted ceiling, cresting the form of a mock pendentive. These arches rise to a height of 40 feet above the rear aisle floor to a circular opening 55 feet in diameter, upon which rests a ribbed dome rising to a height of 50 feet above the floor, with a ventilation grille and central chandelier located at its apex.

2. Stairways:

There are five marble stairways in the theater. One each at the southeast and southwest corners of the lobby leading to the balcony seating area; one set of stairs from the lobby entrance off the Arcade leading to the main lobby and steps on either side of the ramps, leading down to the mens and ladies room respectively.

3. Flooring:

The floors in the lobby area, as stated earlier in this report, are of concrete slab-on-grade construction with an undistinguished, simply patterned terrazzo floor finish. The floor is randomly cracked in several locations with one area, near the stairs in the southwest corner, broken-up and heaved. Excessive leakage, saturation of the subgrade, and freeze-thaw cycling are the apparent cause. Overall, however, the floor is readily restorable to near its original condition or easily repaired to receive a new finish, such as carpeting.

The floors of the auditorium, as described earlier in this report, are of concrete slab-on-grade construction for the main level of seating and composite steel frame and cast-in-place concrete construction for the upper level of seating. The slab-on-grade is randomly cracked but is true to its plane and has not suffered any frost displacement. The elevated slab is in good condition and shows no signs of deterioration. Both floors appear quite repairable to receive either paint or carpeting as a finish.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish:

Pilasters, walls and lighting cove: The walls and pilasters of the auditorium space are composed of decorated, painted plaster, applied either directly to the exterior brick walls of the structure or directly to clay tile partitions, as in the case of the walls encasing the structural columns at the four support points of the ceilings's mock pendentive form. There is a limited amount of artificial marble wainscoting on the east and west walls at the ends of the rear aisle. In all other locations where wainscoting is present it is made up of wood and painted. The east and west walls and pilasters are fairly simple, plain walls with the sections of

wall between the pilasters draped with large undecorated stage curtain fabric. The pilasters themselves have a band of moulding and embossed plaster four feet below the lighting cove, with embossed plaster medallions and garlands on the wall between the bank and the cove. The lighting cove is a wide ornately embossed running plaster mould that circuits the entire perimeter of the auditorium space. This cove concealed the theater's indirect lighting system and forms the break between the suspended ceiling system and the wall support plasterwork and cove.

The east wall, adjacent to the Arcade, has suffered substantial water damage from the leaking roof and the Arcade wall, with approximately 50% of the cove damaged or missing completely. Damage extends roughly 1/3 to 1/2 the way down the wall with the bottom half being relatively undamaged and sound. The west wall similarly has also suffered substantial damage to its upper portions and cove, with the worst area being near the stairway at the southwest corner, approximately 40% of the cove is damaged or missing on this side.

This damage is the result of roof leakage entering at the gutters, saturating the brick wall behind the backside of the lower portions of the ceiling, and flooding the cove. When this accumulated moisture freezes, the plaster delaminates internally and is blown off its backing. The south wall and cove, which are the least ornamented in the building, are relatively undamaged and sound. The suspended cove and embossed plaster frieze above the columns at the stage area are relatively undamaged and complete in all their detail.

Unfortunately the most decorative and ornamented portions of the auditorium walls and lighting cove have received the greatest amount of damage. The repair and restoration, if undertaken, would involve sounding out and removing all the loose or damaged plaster, provide solid anchorages and reinforcement, replaster duplicating the embossing and mould work, and paint the finished product. This sounding out and removal step will, in all likelihood, uncover soft spots and reveal substantially more work that would be required for a complete restoration.

Ceiling and suspension system: This highly decorative plaster ceiling is, as stated previously, a great plaster shell suspended from the structure of the roof above. This plaster shell, as well as being the predominant architectural element, provides a fire resistive barrier between the auditorium below and the steel structure above. A thorough inspection of the current status of this ceiling involves observation from below, assessing the extent of damage and evidence of weakness, as well as close examination of the condition of the suspension system above.

The hemispherical dome over the stage and orchestra pit area of the auditorium is composed of a smooth plastered lower section, rising from the lighting cove roughly half way up the ceiling. The upper half is a highly decorated section of applied embossed plaster with the ventilation grille at its center. This section is composed of cameos, patterned areas framed with mouldings, medallions, and garlands. In this area, approximately 50% of the ornament has delaminated and fallen to the floor below exposing the scratch coat of plaster. Overall 25% of this hemispherical dome is down to the scratch coat with a significant area of rust staining, from the metal lath above, found on the east side of center. In addition, areas of white staining or efflorescence indicate presence of substantial amounts of moisture leaching salts through the plaster to the finished surface below.

Separating the hemispherical stage ceiling from the pendentive and dome over the main area of seating is a broad sweeping arch highly decorated with a pattern of repeating geometric embossed and recessed panels. This arch has received moderate damage over 50% of its area with significant damage on the east side, exposing the scratch coat and areas of rusting.

As described previously, the section of ceiling over the main area of the theater takes the form of a mock pendentive rising to support a central dome. Three quarters of the area of this section of ceiling is composed of smooth plastered panels with embossed mouldings and ribs describing the pattern of sweeping arches supporting the dome opening. The horizontal surface of the dome opening is a ring of embossed plaster panels depicting animals and human figures. This opening decoration turns up vertically to a classical dental mould and the whole construction forms a cove for the indirect lighting of the dome. The dome is decorated with curved sweeping deep applied plaster ribs with embossed figures in the recessed panels created by the ribs.

In earlier discussion, the damaged walls and lighting cove on the east and west sides were identified. The smooth plaster ceiling on both these sides have also received substantial damage. The entire area rising to the central dome is riddled with cracks, stained with efflorescence, and large areas of plaster just above the cove have fallen exposing the scratch coat and characteristic rust staining. In several locations one can see that the metal lath has rusted out completely exposing the suspension ribs behind. Indeed a very advanced stage of deterioration. This delamination of the finish or hard coat is due substantially to the migration of moisture through the more porous scratch and brown coats, stopping at the barrier created by the denser hard coat. This moisture freezes and thaws, destroying the internal bond of the plaster, resulting in cracking

and falling of the finish coat with its applied decorative ornament.

The decorated ring and cover assembly at the base of the dome have also shown the effects of serious water damage resulting in 50% of its ornament damaged or in the seats below. The plaster dome itself appears to be relatively intact, with approximately 25% of its ornament damaged or missing entirely.

The attic space has a catwalk system that provides access to numerous locations above the ceiling permitting detailed examination. The ceiling suspension system is made up of uncoated steel components. The plaster is bonded to an expanded metal lath that is wired at 6 inch intervals with light gauge wire to secondary carrier ribs that are spaced at 12 to 14 inches on center. These ribs are rolled steel channels, measuring 1"x3/8". These carrier ribs are in turn attached to main carrier channels, spaced at 44 inches on center, with a heavy gauge wire clip. These main carriers are rolled steel channels, measuring 1½"x½", and are supported or suspended from the structure above by steel straps spaced at 44 to 50 inches on center and measuring 1"x3/16". In the case of the central dome, the main carriers are 2"x2"x¼" rolled steel angles. One third of the hangar straps are bolted to the rotted wood roof rafters above. The remaining two thirds are wrapped around or bolted to the steel roof framing members.

The combination of severe roof leakage and absence of attic ventilation have contributed to extensive corrosion of suspension components. The hangar straps, main carriers, secondary carriers, and their attachments, although rusted, appear sufficient to carry the loads imposed. In a restoration effort these components would have to be thoroughly cleaned and coated with a bituminous product or rust inhibiting paint. The wires attaching the metal lath to the secondary carriers and the metallath itself, however, are in grave condition in many areas. The tie wires are rusted and brittle and the more severely rusted ones can be broken easily. The metal lath in many areas is severely rusted, can be broken easily, and has contributed to the failure of the scratch coat or plaster evidenced by rust staining and delamination. This is due, in part, to the expansive action of corroding steel and the resultant destruction of the mechanical connection between lath and plaster.

5. Woodwork, Stage Furnishing and Loge Boxes:

There is a substantial amount of woodwork found throughout the auditorium. It is predominately in the form of low walls, as around the orchestra pit and at the base of the stage, or wainscoting on the east and west walls. It is also used as paneling on the north side of the loge boxes and built around steel framing as the walls separating the upper seating area from the main seating level. In all cases the woodwork appears as framed panels, constructed of pine, and painted.

For the most part it is in good condition and readily restorable by cleaning and painting.

The only significant examples of stage furnishings are the ten corinthian columns composed of precast plaster and brightly painted. These are apparently two piece columns with the joint running the length. They are assembled around wood centering and perform no structural purpose. They are in excellent condition and readily restorable. If required, they could be dismantled and removed intact from the structure.

The loge boxes are private seating areas located at the rear of the main level of seating immediately in front of the rear aisle. They are enclosed on three sides with the same type of artificial marble found in the lobby. The rear of the box is solid partition with the sides being short sections composed of pilaster and balustrade. The condition of these boxes is relatively good with some chipped areas at the corners. Cleaning, polishing, and recoating or waxing will restore these boxes to near their original appearance. They also could be dismantled and removed or supply the lobby restoration with components of matching artificial marble.

Stage: The stage area at the north end of the structure measures approximately 55 feet in width with an average depth of 13 feet. The clear height to the ceiling and structure above is approximately 24 feet with no possibility of additional height for fly space. Storage and dressing areas, totaling 1250 sq. ft., are located in two, two-level structures on the right and left sides backstage. This stage and backstage areas are unfinished space and their condition have been described in the building structure section of this study. It should be pointed out at this point that the stage and backstage are quite limited in size and make it exceptionally difficult to stage any legitimate type of production in this theater. Furthermore, the physical structure of the building and tightness of property lines make expansion of the stage and backstage facilities virtually impossible.

6. Seating:

The seating on the main level and in the loge boxes at the rear aisle are not original and appear to date from the 1950's. They are undistinguished typical theater seats with iron pilasters and supports bolted to the floor. The metal components are moderately rusted with the seat and back cushions in fair to poor condition, suffering water damage and some vandalism. The upper level seating appears to be original judging from the more decorative iron pilasters and the presence of wire hat racks on the seat bottoms. This seating is in roughly the same condition as on the main level. Most of the seats are operable and probably can be restored requiring refinishing, reupholstery, and lubrication.

7. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: These major subsystems have not been in operation since 1977. The heating system was located beneath the arcade adjacent to the State Theater. Access is not available to this area. Air conditioning and ventilation systems were set up adjacent to the projection room. Large circulation fans drew air from the main theater through the ventilation grates at the top of the half dome above the stage and the dome above the seating area.

b. Lighting: The main theater was lighted by a chandelier hanging from the central dome and wall sconces on the side of the theater. The stage was lighted by a row of permanently installed footlights. Follow spots were used at one time to light the stage from the projection room area, but these were not used for approximately twenty years prior to closing.

c. Plumbing: Steel pipe was used exclusively to serve the rest rooms, and repair shop areas. The rest rooms were equipped with common porcelain pedestal sinks, and toilets. No unusual hardware was found on the premises.

d. Site: The theater was built on a site with a Northeast, Southwest orientation bounded by Liberty Street to the Northeast, the Wedgeway Building arcade and Erie Theater to the Southeast, the rear of State Street buildings to the Southwest and the Schenectady Federal Savings parking lot to the Northwest. The site is adjacent to the former Erie Canal.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

A. Original Architectural Drawings:

Submitted with this outline are 4x5 photos of original architectural drawings showing; a longitudinal section of the main theater from Southwest to Northeast, elevations of the Northeast, Southeast and arcade, Southwest and Northwest, facades, attic and roof plans, and foundations. All drawings were done by the Architect, Reilly and Hall, 405 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York.

B. Early views:

No early interior or exterior views of the theater could be found after a thorough search of the City's History Center.

C. Bibliography:

John Meyers, Project Architect, State Theater Building, Study of Structural Stability and Potential Re-use, Smith-Mahoney P.C., 1982. This publication is on file in the Department of Housing, Room 7, City Hall, Schenectady, New York 12305.

R.D. Heldenfels, "Tattered State Theater Waits for Wrecker", Schenectady Gazette, May 4, 1983. Obtained opening date information and general history of theater.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

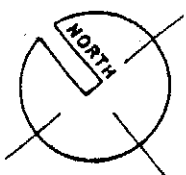
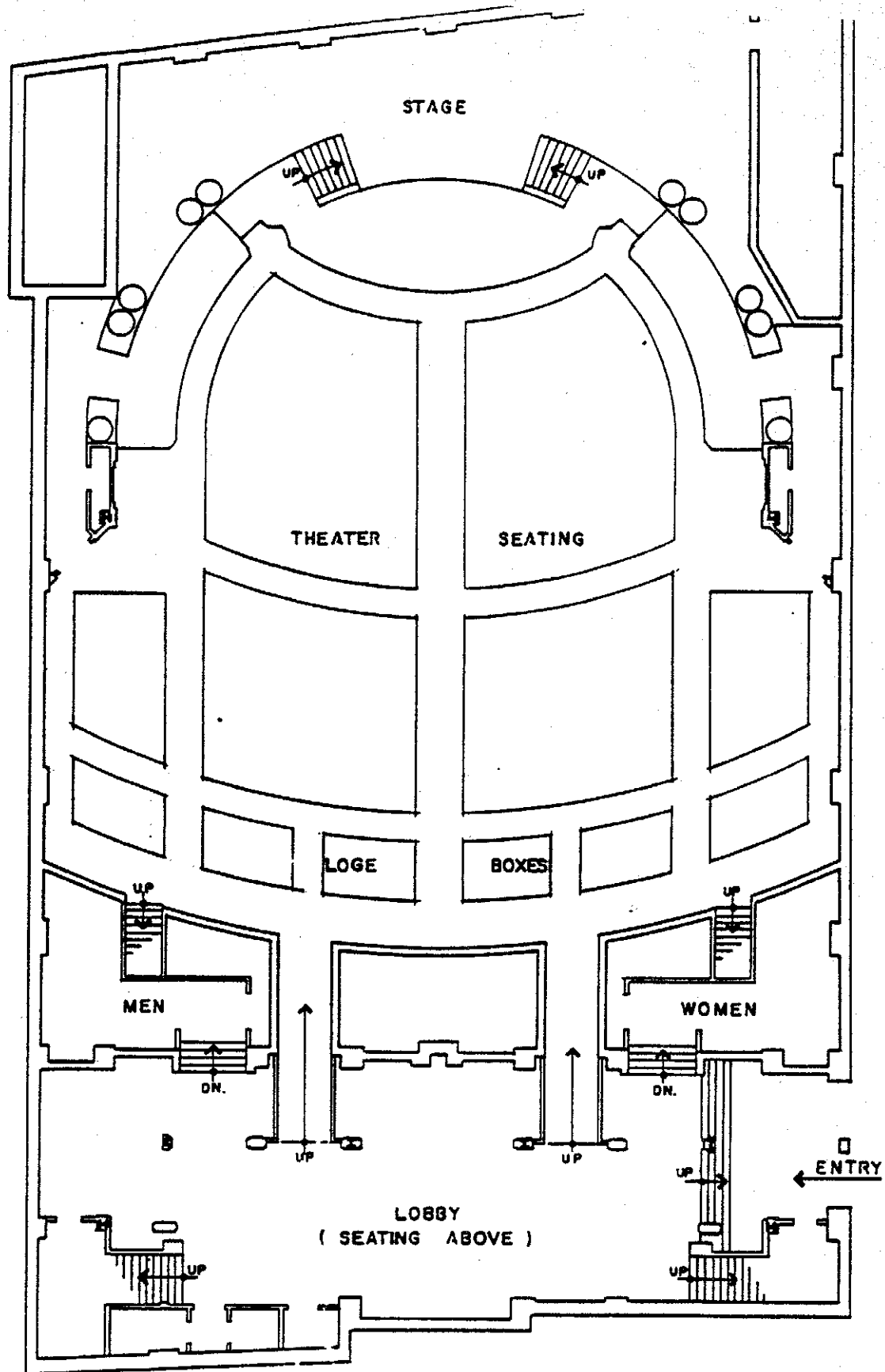
A. Project Sponsors:

The State Theater is being demolished to provide ample parking for the Barney Square Urban Development Action Grant approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Barney's Square will renovate the former Barney's Department Store which is eligible for listing on the National Register. The developers of the Barney's Square Project are Robert Lupe and Amelia Lupe Owen. The building will be developed into approximately 70 apartments and 7,000 square feet of commercial space.

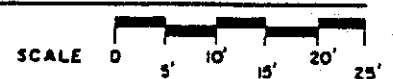
B. Record Preparation:

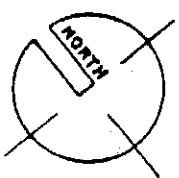
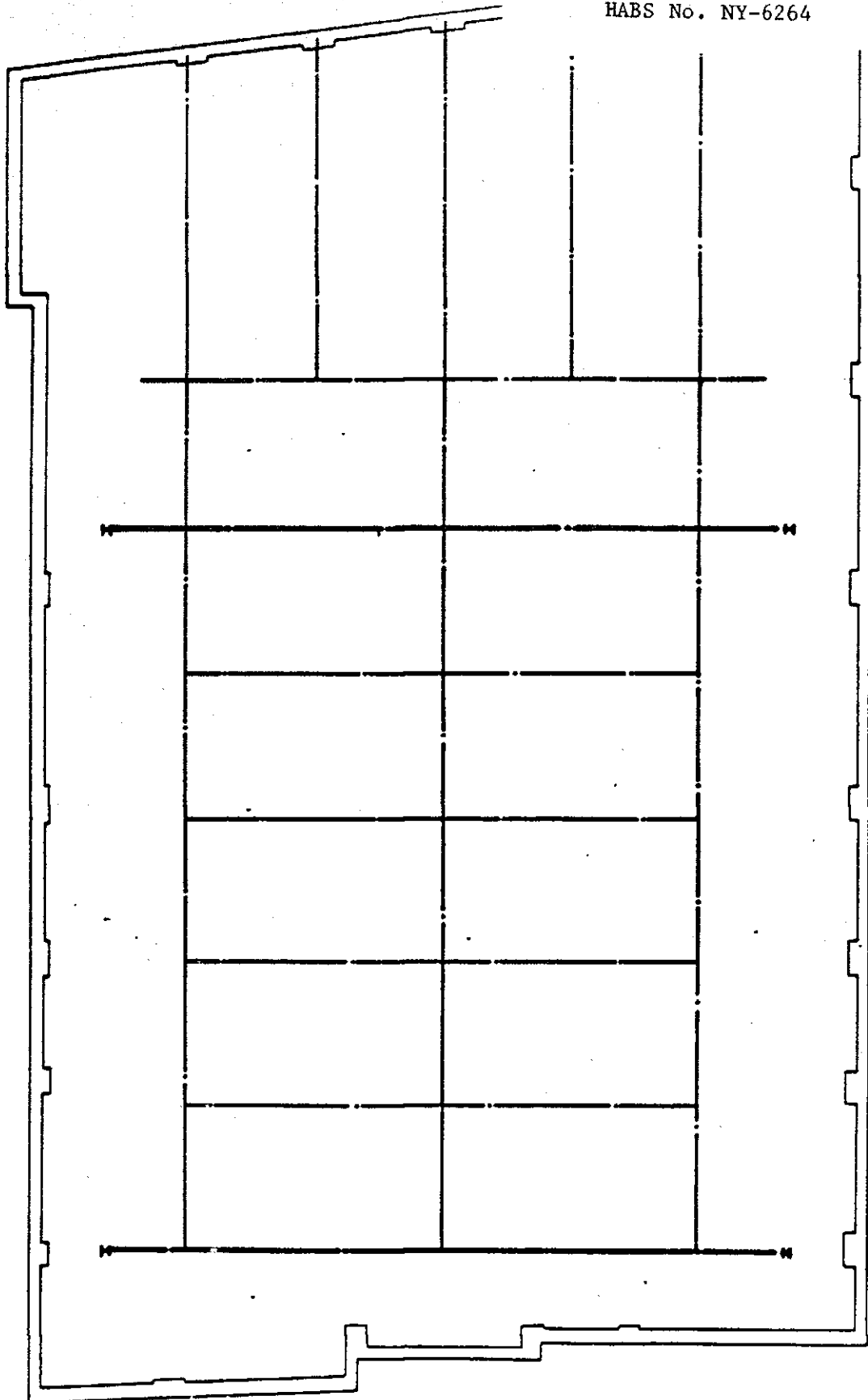
The following people contributed information, photographs or data for the preparation of the record submitted to the Historic American Building Survey.

1. James Kalohn, Housing Planner City of Schenectady
2. Richard A. Siciliano, Photographer, 807 Albany Street, Schenectady, New York 12307
3. William R. Cook, Director Dept. of Housing Schenectady
4. John Meyers, Architect - Consultant, Smith-Mahoney, 79 N. Pearl Street, Albany, New York 12207



FLOOR PLAN
State Theater Building





ROOF FRAMING PLAN
State Theater Building

